

UNITED STATES

Bullet theory didn't hit home

LESS than a year after the assassination of President John Kennedy, there were disagreements over whether the same bullet struck Kennedy and Texas Governor John Connally. Among the dissenters: President Lyndon Johnson.

In the latest tapes released by the US government, there is a call from Senator Richard Russell to Mr Johnson on September 18, 1964.

The senator notes that some people believed "the same bullet that hit Kennedy first is the one that hit Connally".

Responding to Mr Johnson's musing, Mr Russell says, "well, it don't make much difference". He then adds: "Well, I don't believe it."

"I don't either," Mr Johnson responds.

Through the years, arguments have turned on whether the same bullet could have passed through Kennedy, then wounded Connally. The two were struck almost simultaneously.

If the same bullet could not have wounded both men, there had to have been a second gunman.

LBJ's 'haste' to be president



JOHN F. KENNEDY



LYNDON JOHNSON

By IRWIN ARIEFF
of Reuters

LYNDON JOHNSON was infuriated at his portrayal as "a Texas hick in a hurry to be sworn in" as president following the 1963 assassination of John Kennedy, transcripts just released reveal.

Johnson was particularly perturbed by suggestions that the slain president's brother and Attorney-General Robert "Bobby" Kennedy had objected to the haste with which he allegedly wished to be sworn in, the transcripts show.

A book by historian William Manchester attributed to Johnson a statement that his first thoughts after the assassination had been of the swearing-in of Harry Truman upon the death in April 1945 of Franklin Roosevelt.

"I think at the moment a president dies, the vice-president becomes president, and I have not discussed it with anyone to my knowledge. I've never discussed the Truman oath-taking — last week or last month," Johnson said in a December 26, 1967, conversation with his press secretary Bill Moyers, according to the transcripts.

"What raced through my mind was that, if they had shot our president, who would they shoot

next, and what was going on in Washington, and when would the missiles be coming. And I thought that it was a conspiracy, and I raised that question, and nearly everybody that was with me raised that," Johnson said.

Concerning Bobby Kennedy's view toward his swearing-in, Johnson said: "I don't think Bobby took any initiative or any direction. I think Bobby agreed that it would be all right to be sworn in, and he said he wanted to look into it and he would get

'It's a goddamned lie. That's my best judgment, which I bet my life on'

back to me, which he did." The conversation with Moyers focused on news reports of the imminent serialisation in the now-defunct *Look* magazine of Manchester's book, *Death of a President*.

"It didn't happen. I think it's a goddamned lie. Now that's my best judgment, which I bet my life on," Johnson said of the Manchester account of the turbulent days following the November 22, 1963, assassination of Kennedy, and of Johnson's as-

cendancy to the presidency. "I think they are going to write history as they want it written, and as they can buy it written," he said of Manchester and other authors he felt were biased against him and in favour of the Kennedy family.

"And I think the best way we can write it is to try to refrain from getting into an argument or a fight or a knockdown, and go on and do our job every day as best we can," Johnson said.

As well as Manchester, Johnson cited historian Theodore White, author of the *Making of the President* series, to be similarly biased against him.

"I think they are agents of the people who want to destroy me," he said.

Johnson also was extremely upset by a report that he had called the president's widow Jackie, "honey". The report was an attempt to portray him as an unsophisticated Texan, he said.

Johnson advised Moyers against publicly disputing the reports on the Manchester book point-by-point, concluding he had been "disarmed" by the many news leaks.

Instead, he instructed Moyers to issue a simple denial of the account and state they had come from "so-called friends and alleged intimates".